

A U S T R A L I A N
G A R D E N
H I S T O R Y

JOURNAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

EDITORIAL

Involvement through working bees

Garden visiting is becoming a popular pastime for the general public and this is to be commended. We, as members of the Australian Garden History Society, though, have a unique opportunity to get to know many gardens more intimately by taking part in working bees on some of our significant historic properties. This is far more personally rewarding than being part of a mass invasion as so often occurs with a garden opening. Garden owners today are stretched to the limit financially and in many cases are struggling to resource the day to day maintenance activities such as lawn mowing, watering, and so find it impossible to resource the larger activities such as cleaning out totally overgrown areas. A group of eager volunteers can tackle such tasks with gusto and be able at the end of the day to enjoy that feeling of satisfaction of giving of one's self to a worthwhile activity. So, next time your branch organises a working bee, offer your services, you will enjoy the opportunity and gain satisfaction that in a small way you are making a positive contribution to the conservation of part of our Heritage.

*Helen Page
Victorian Branch*

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Cover: A classical vase in the garden at Dalvui, Victoria (see article on page 10)

Assistance with the Journal

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The Australian Garden History Society was formed in 1980 to bring together those with an interest in the various aspects of garden history—horticulture, landscape design, architecture and related subjects. Its prime concern is to promote interest and research into historic gardens as a major component of the National Estate. It aims to look at garden making in a wide historic, literary, artistic and scientific context.

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WISTARIA GARDENS, PARRAMATTA

The battle to save one of the gems of Sydney's west

Few people familiar with the Wistaria Gardens, in the grounds of the historic Cumberland Hospital, could believe the rumour in September 1990 that the gardens were soon to be redeveloped in a plan to contract the hospital to one third its former size. After all, were not these gardens the most visited and famous of any in Sydney's west? However, before discussing this threat and its outcome, it is perhaps appropriate to examine the gardens' history.

The site of the Wistaria Gardens is near the junction of Toongabbie and Darling Mills Creeks – the very source of the Parramatta River. Following the colonisation of the Parramatta region in 1788, choice land was set aside by Captain Arthur Phillip for Government purposes, later known as the Domain. This land was the site of the first truly successful agricultural efforts in Australia. On the river below the site, Governor John Hunter caused a water driven mill to be erected for the benefit of the colony and this mill operated from the 1790s until 1820.

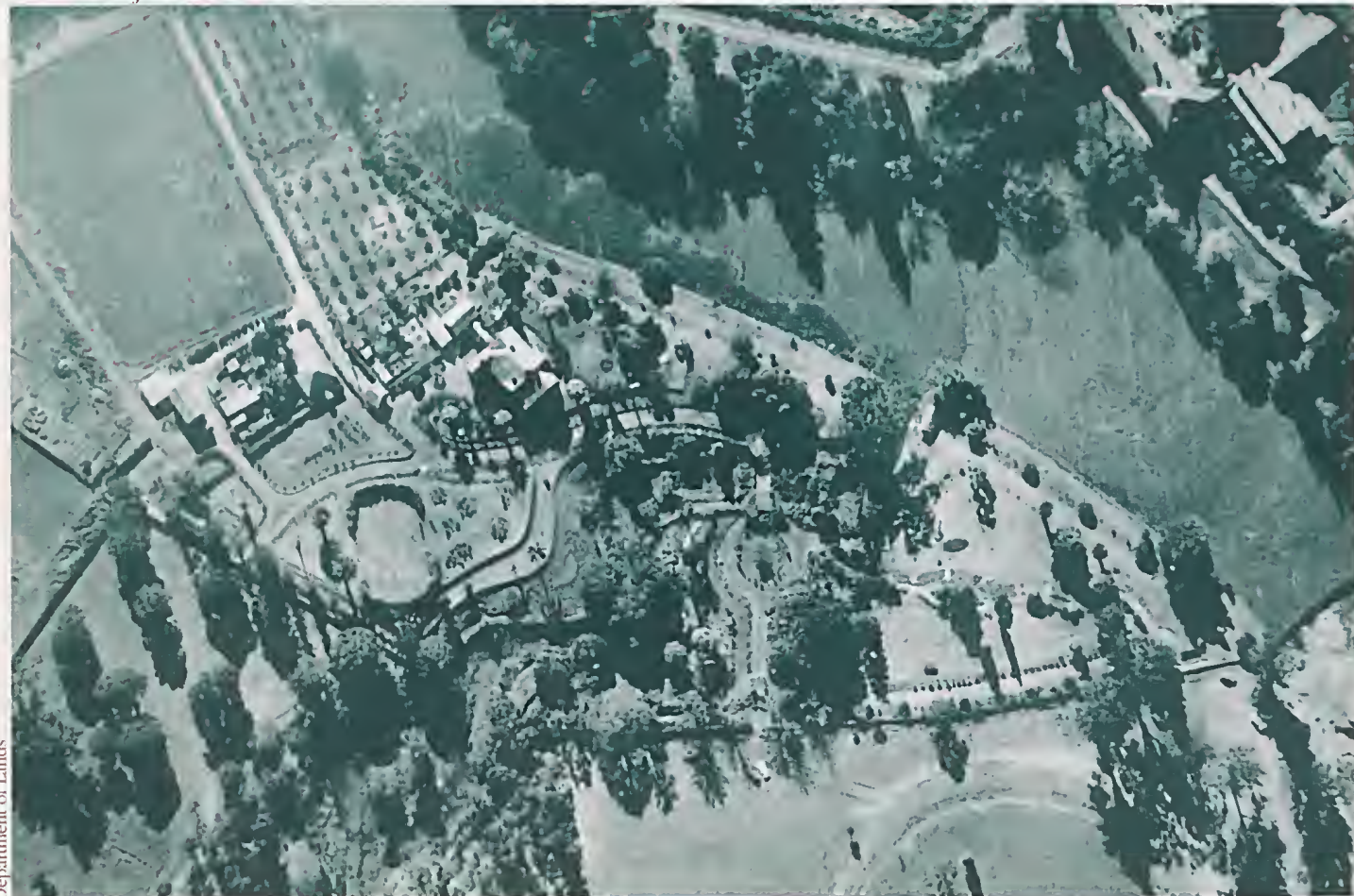
Meanwhile, land was being granted to colonists for the purpose of farming and in 1792, thirty acres was granted to a Charles Smith upstream on the opposite bank of the river. In 1812 the 'flogging Parson' the Reverend Samuel Marsden, purchased Smith's land and acquired a further six acres by grant. Marsden also erected a flour mill, which was purchased along with the land, by the explorer Gregory Blaxland in 1840. On the bank directly opposite the Wistaria Gardens, Governor Lachlan Macquarie com-

missioned the convict architect Francis Greenway to design an establishment for convict women which was built between 1818 and 1821. This establishment became known as the (infamous) Female Factory. Over the next twenty years the Female Factory was a source of great discomfort to Macquarie's successors, a place of shameful treatment of women, corruption, riots and requiring much expense to maintain (let alone improve!).

By the early 1840s, it was considered politically unpalatable to continue to accept convicts from England and the establishment was turned over and used as a benevolent institution for invalid and lunatic women. On the 31st of December 1849, the institution was officially gazetted as the 'Parramatta Lunatic Asylum'. During the Superintendence of Dr Richard Greenup (1852-1866), the asylum was greatly expanded; there was the purchase of the adjoining Blaxland property in 1866 for £2500, and the granting of twenty six acres of land from the Government Domain at the same time for the purposes of the asylum. Wistaria House and Gardens now occupy part of that grant. Tragically Dr Greenup, widely known for his humanity and concern for the mentally ill, never saw any benefit from his efforts; he was murdered by a patient in July 1866.

The next important phase in the history of the site did not occur until 1906, when the then Superintendent Dr William Charles Williamson had a large new residence constructed on part of the land granted from the Domain.

Aerial view of Wistaria Gardens c1961





David Beaver

View of the facade of Wistaria House with Tree Gardenia in foreground and Cotton Palm in background, 1991



Cumberland Hospital Museum

Wistaria House c1946, note the Wistaria overhanging the banks of Domain Creek in the foreground and the timber 'Tori' gate to the right of the house

Dr Williamson had briefly superintended the asylum in the early 1880s, but after administering other hospitals from the mid 1880s to 1901, found himself again appointed to Parramatta. Williamson was known to be interested in botany, and existing plantings in the grounds, dating from the early 1880s, are thought to have occurred through his influence. Consequently many rare and exotic trees now occupy much of the present Cumberland Hospital site.

Mr. Paull planted up to 80,000
spring annuals every year
to ensure that the gardens
were at their most impressive
for the Wistaria Fete

Concurrent with the building of the new residence, extensive landscaping of the site was undertaken, with the course of a small stream (Domain Creek) modified into a serpentine shape through the use of cut sandstone blocks. This stream dissected the garden and was dammed in two places to provide deep pools, which enhanced the romantic nature of the gardens. The house was designed by the Government Architect, Walter Liberty Vernon and how much he and Dr Williamson collaborated in the garden design is unknown. However, it seems probable that both had considerable influence over the original plan.

The Wistaria that became the main feature of the gardens was collected by Dr Williamson in 1907 during a trip to Japan. Upon his return, he had several lych and Tori gates, arbors and arches constructed within the garden as features and supports for the Wistaria vines. The mainte-

nance of the gardens fell to patients under the supervision of a gardener. Following Dr Williamson's retirement in 1922, Dr Guy Prior became the Superintendent and it was he in 1929, who first opened the gardens for public inspection. This was the birth of the Wistaria Gardens fete, which has been held annually in September since 1930.

The gardens were regarded to be at their peak from the mid 1950s to the late 1970s. Of particular note was the many awards won by the gardens, during the tenure of Reg Paull as head gardener (1964 to 1976). Paull planted up to 80,000 spring annuals every year to ensure that the gardens were at their most impressive for the Wistaria Fete. Sadly due to budgetary constraints, there has been a dramatic slide in the condition of the gardens since the early 1980s. The huge rose garden has been removed, annual beds grassed over, garden features demolished and severe damage to some of the trees has occurred. In spite of this deterioration, the gardens are still magnificent and are by no means beyond restoration.

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In 1963, the house ceased to be the residence of the Superintendent following the retirement of Dr Eric Hilliard. After two years serving as a pre-discharge hostel, it was turned over as a ward for the treatment of addictions. This function continued until mid 1992, when the service was

relocated and the building left vacant – as it is today.

At last we arrive at the next major chapter in the Wistaria Gardens' history, the threatened redevelopment of the site.

For much of 1990 there had been a persistent rumour that the gardens were threatened, however there was always denial when official sources were contacted. Another important garden site at Cumberland Hospital had been (without notice), unceremoniously ploughed under for the construction of a nursing home in 1989. It was generally feared that Wistaria might suffer the same fate and assurances that this would not be the case raised little hope. There had been expressions of concern for the garden's fate from some heritage and historical groups, but no real concerted effort to ensure the area's conservation. This circumstance changed with the formation of a 'Friends' group, that not only agitated other groups for support, but also became quite a nuisance to officialdom.

The friends group was able to establish that the official statements attesting to the conservation of the gardens was quite true. This was true, that is, if one could accept the redrawing of the historical boundaries by the developer! This new survey wiped almost fifty percent of the garden away, including several palm and pine stands, many important garden beds, lawns, a large arbor and the house. Needless to say the protests began in earnest, particularly in light of the previous garden demolition experience at the hospital. Fortunately quick support was forthcoming from the National Trust and various heritage groups in the region, with a good response from a hastily organised

public protest meeting.

In the face of such opposition, it was agreed that an independent conservation study would be undertaken urgently. It was expected that all interested parties would abide by its conclusions. Needless to say, the conservation study completed in August 1991, firmly vindicated the stand of the heritage minded groups and the redevelopment plans were subsequently altered. There was some give and take; approximately five percent of the area within the historical boundaries were ceded, although this was the site of a carpark that had been constructed in the late 1970s and thus already lost. This was offset by an agreement to eventually refurbish the house for public and patient use. In May 1992, a sum of \$190,000 was set aside for this purpose: a coffee shop will exist on the ground floor and a hospital museum upstairs, expected completion by the end of 1993.

The irony is, had there been no plans to dramatically damage the site, its destruction by degrees through the aforementioned neglect, may have rendered the gardens unsalvageable within the next few years. This is perhaps a most important lesson, many people had bemoaned the recent gradual deterioration of the gardens but had not felt sufficiently disturbed enough to agitate for their preservation.

How much has been insidiously lost elsewhere through a similar process?

Terry Smith

Wistaria Gardens c1940 showing bridge and hexagonal arbor covered with Wistaria



HAMILTON: A VILLAGE OF VAN DIEMANS LAND



A rambling rose overbanging a timber fence of a cottage in the village of Hamilton

Hamilton is approximately eighty kilometres from Hobart, by the way of the picturesque Derwent Valley road which passes through New Norfolk and Gretna. The first settlers arrived in the area shortly after the settlement of New Norfolk in 1807. By 1828 the town was established and was recorded as 'a few weatherboard and sod cottages on the cottages on the banks of the River Clyde'. Today it is stone that gives the feeling of age and of history, from the stone cottages to the public buildings. St. Peter's Anglican Church, located on the hill overlooking the village, dates from 1834 and was designed under the direction of colonial architect John Lee Archer by his chief clerk Mr Winch. The Council Chambers, comprising a Victorian stone building with a hipped iron roof, is flanked by two Georgian rubble stone cottages and is an interesting juxtaposition of different styles.

It is the cottages of Hamilton however that are most interesting. Most were built by the convicts who came to build the church and the Council Chambers. So the history of the cottages began as part of the history of convict labour, and as they were built for the anticipated residents of the town, perhaps they were the first speculative buildings in the Colony. The town occupied an important location in the development of roads and agriculture and the population rapidly increased, peaking in 1881 to four hundred residents. Developments such as the Langlosh coal mine to the north east of the town in the late 1930s ensured its importance as a major rural centre in the first part of the twentieth century. The demise and decline of

Hamilton came with increasing mechanisation and improved road transport. This led to decay and the ultimate demolition of many of the town's buildings with the stone being sold in Hobart for two dollars per block in the 1970s.

The Whitlam era (1972-1975), with its encouragement of the arts and crafts industry, halted this decline. Artisans were looking for a total environment and the sculptural properties of the simple stone cottages in an idyllic village environment had great appeal. With the change in politics in 1976, came a change in the fortune of the cottages, and they were once more vacant and in danger of being lost. It was then that people such as Judy Madden began to buy the cottages in order to save them. As a resident of the town, she was only too well aware of their historic importance. They were an integral part of the streetscape of the town. However, for Judy, who now owns four of the cottages, their salvation had to be commercial enterprise; and so after being painstakingly restored, they are let for tourist accommodation and can be enjoyed by many as 'Cottages of the Colony'.

In the same way that the buildings have been saved, so have the gardens. Post and rail fences remain with early varieties of roses tumbling over and through them into the street. Old stone walls have been repaired to create secluded garden rooms away from the modern imposition of traffic noise. From each of the cottage gardens, one can look out to the serenity of the Clyde River Valley and grazing land.

The early cottage gardeners are recorded as being very

resourceful, and used to scour their district for cuttings, seeds, bulbs and other plants. Judy Madden has restored her cottage gardens in the same way. Most of the plants have been propagated from plant material in the Hamilton area. Each cottage garden complements the particular cottage it surrounds. And as well each has its own interesting outbuildings. In one, there is an old slab shed, with remnants of wallpaper on the wide slabs, and the remains of a stone flag floor. Beside it the old post and rail fence has been stabilised by discretely bolting metal droppers beside each post. Over it spill old varieties of *Salvia*, *Nepeta*, *Euphorbia* and *Roses*.

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Three other nearby cottages provide an interesting contrast. One is owned by seventy eight year old Mrs Nathy Hills and has been nurtured by her for more than thirty years. Behind her cottage is the old blacksmiths shed and rather than a formal box garden edging, the discarded horse shoes have been used. The garden has no definite plan, but has evolved to incorporate the early outbuildings, the fowl yard, some interesting statuary and the owner's love of creating a garden. For many this would be the true cottage garden.

Next door to Mrs Hills' garden, but set back some dis-

tance from the street, is the Anglican rectory. The front garden of this property contains evidence of a small formal garden with central front path and circular bed, together with the remnants of formal plantings each side of the path.

By contrast the third is a modern cottage garden which grew from the owner's love of collecting plants. The garden of Mrs Lyn Burke is a more modern interpretation removed from the utilitarian purpose of the early cottage garden, but one that provides an interesting interpretation.

These cottages and their gardens are an integral part of the village of Hamilton. But what is exactly meant by a village? It is not easy to say. At one extreme, the village shades almost imperceptibly into the small town and at the other point into the hamlet. It is very difficult to define at which point this happens. Perhaps it should be a matter of character. However the village character is almost as dependant on the character of the spaces both within and outside the village, as on the architectural forms which surround them. There is an important link with the surrounding countryside, as the village relates to the character of its rural hinterland, through visual links and view corridors. The character of the spaces within the village is determined by their plantings.

Perhaps the definition of the cottage garden is also one of extremes and contrasts. Is it age or character both within the garden and the architectural forms the garden surrounds? Or is the cottage garden strictly determined by the design and planting it contains?

Ann Cripps

BELMONT TREE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The historic property Belmont, north-west of Beaufort, is well-known to many members of the Australian Garden History Society. The garden was visited by delegates who attended the 1984 Ballarat Conference, and there have been many return visits by members since. In 1988, Andrea Bathie, a Burnley student, prepared a Conservation Analysis on the historic landscape which was reported in *Australian Garden History* 2 (1) 4-6.

The Victorian Branch has held a number of working bees to assist the owners with the care of this remarkable garden. In 1992 the Victorian Branch received \$4,000 from the National Estate Grants Program to remove a large Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*) growing close to the front of the house. An additional \$1,935 was provided by the Branch to remove additional dead trees and pine seedlings beside the pond, which had grown to a large size.

The two Monterey Pines in the front garden are thought to have been planted in the early 1860s, making them about 130 years old. An 1864 photograph of Belmont shows a pine tree (possibly the tree removed) about one metre high. *Pinus radiata* became available in Victoria in 1857 and was widely planted in the 1860s due to its rapid

growth and hardiness. A photograph of the homestead taken in about 1890 shows two well-established Monterey Pines.

A local tree surgeon/arborist, Trevor Lawrence from Ballarat, was approached to prepare a report for the removal and management of several pine trees. Trevor had previously undertaken work at Belmont in 1984 when he removed several limbs from the pine that were growing over part of the residence.

The total removal of this pine tree posed several problems, in particular, its enormous size, the amount of timber and foliage to be removed from the site, and a small working area. Care had to be taken not to damage the surrounding garden beds or the pine tree on the north side which was being retained. Access for machinery was difficult and the house and pond were in close proximity.

The tree was about forty metres in height and formed two main trunks two metres above ground level. The diameter of the tree was 2.2 metres. The trunk closest to the house had been crown reduced, but the other trunk extended well beyond the height limits of the seventy foot travel tower. This meant that Trevor had to climb into the



Above: Belmont c.1890 showing the two Monterey Pines (right of centre) in the front garden

Left: The tree closest to the house was removed in December 1992. The Monterey Pine removed is in the centre, while the pine retained is to the left

crown of the tree. The top of the tree was carefully roped down and the trunk sections were free-felled, pulled over by a cable attached to a log-loader. The travel tower was in constant use for two days and a six tonne capacity log-loader for three days. It was estimated that the butt log weighted about five tonnes.

A total of six pine trees, including two dead trees in the paddock opposite the house, were removed. The two large pine seedlings beside the pond were about eighty years old according to a ring count. Any log wood that could be salvaged was collected by Bert Arnell, a local sawmill operator from Raglan, who estimated that he carted away about twenty five tonnes (five truck loads) of timber. The removal of these logs was at no cost to the project. The milled timber will be used for packing cases and pallets.

All the waste timber, foliage and branches were removed from the garden and deposited in a heap ready for burning this autumn. Following completion of the works several Branch members spent a day cleaning the site, raked the garden beds and replaced the fence. Further works to be undertaken will include replanting the Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) hedge and shrub planting. It is not intended to replace the Monterey Pine, due to the close proximity of the house.

John Hawker

AUTUMN IN VICTORIA

From April 21 to 26 I had the enjoyable task of conducting a group of twenty-one AGHS members through gardens in Victoria's Western Districts. Our first garden on the tour was Lal Lal owned by the Fiskin family since 1846. Patricia Fiskin welcomed us. The present garden dates from 1911 and from the house looks out over a lake and the surrounding countryside. Open lawn areas are enclosed by early shrubberies and perennial borders.

At Ballarat we visited Mr and Mrs Cuthbert's garden in Webster Street. The garden is considered to be the most intact Victorian period suburban garden surviving in Victoria. Friends of the Ballarat Botanic Gardens conducted us on an afternoon tour of the Botanic Gardens. The statuary pavilion was of a special interest to tour members.

On day two we enjoyed a morning visit to Langi Willii. An impressive avenue of *Cedrus deodara* leads to the property. The garden dates from 1903 when the homestead was built. Judy McKinnon served us tea on the verandah.

Komong was the setting for lunch. We were welcomed by Noel Calvert. The garden slopes away on it's eastern side and looks out over perfectly clipped cypress hedges down to natural lakes and the surrounding countryside.

Hedges continue around the garden affording protection from wind and creating a rather special *bortus conclusus*, for the enclosed garden also embraces the natural landscape. A birch wood and borders filled with roses and perennials surround the house.

In the afternoon we visited Pat Learmonth's Pear Tree Cottage, a charming cottage garden. In Hamilton our motel was appropriately situated opposite the Botanic Gardens where we stayed three nights.

During our stay in Hamilton we visited Kongbool, a late Victorian homestead dating from 1896. We were welcomed by Rosemary and Tim Baylis and toured the house and garden.

Tamie Fraser welcomed us to Nareen and served lunch on the verandah. The garden has fine deciduous trees including Linden, Pine Oak, Hornbeam and a group of three Variegated Elms. Late flowering roses were in their full autumn flush.

At Mundal Catherine and Sam Winter-Cooke escorted us on a brisk cross country walk to the lakes which form part of the designed landscape inspired by the eighteenth century English landscape tradition. The atmosphere at Mundal is charged with nostalgia for Britain. Trees on the

The pergola at Boortkoi



property date from 1838 and five generations of the Winter-Cooke family have planted a Coronation Avenue, planting two trees for each British coronation.

Robbie Youngman shared her love of her garden Ardgarten with us. Edna Walling designed this garden in the 1930s. Some of her favourite plants are here including Aspen, Poplar, Spindleberry, *Viburnum*, *Spiraea* and *Cotoneaster*. Lunch was enjoyed at Ardgarten.

Elizabeth Falkenberg's garden Northgate is a garden developed over some twenty years and has a collection of shrub roses, trees, and extensive native plantings.

On day five we visited gardens *en route* to Camperdown. Jenny Whitehead at Spring Creek has created interesting plantings that follow the natural slope of the garden to new yellow and white borders at the paddock fence.

Our next garden was nearby Minjah. The homestead was built in 1870 and the old garden is being restored by Anna and James Affleck. Anna's vegetable garden was much admired. Anna has put a wire fence around the garden and enclosed the whole in vines and roses. Anna and her daughters served us lunch in the garden.

Susie and Andrew Manifold welcomed us to Boortkoi. Edna Walling designed this garden in the 1930s. The formal terraces surrounding the house lead down to a wild garden and to Edna Walling's famous pergola by the river. We were delighted to be shown correspondence from Edna Walling and to study her watercolour plan for the garden.

Luki Weatherley greeted us at Woolongoon a garden dating from 1920. The subtle planting within the original form of the garden was impressive and appreciated.

In the evening we were treated to gourmet dinner party

in Camperdown prepared by the ladies of the parish Guild which was presented by Ray Williams of Dalvui, and Rector Kerry Mansell, of St Pauls Anglican Parish. Afterwards we visited the beautiful small church of St Pauls and were given an impromptu recital by one of our tour members from Tasmania, Ivan Pearson, who surprised us all with his mastery of the organ.

Dalvui which dates from 1898, was the first of three Guilfoyle gardens on our last day of the tour. Ray Williams welcomed us and we toured his garden. Ray's planting compositions are creative and bold with emphasis on foliage form and contrast. Most of us agreed that the birch trees lining the drive are the most splendid birches we have seen in Australia.

Janet Gordon welcomed us to Turkeith another historic garden, currently undergoing renovation by the Gordon family. Janet showed us corrective tree surgery made possible by a grant of \$6,000 from Australia's Open Garden Scheme. Work carried out in the garden by members of the AGHS Victorian Branch had been of valuable assistance and revealed treasures long hidden by a tangle of undergrowth.

Angus Ramsay welcomed us to Mooleric. The garden dates from 1903 and the planting and general form are virtually intact. We had lunch in the garden and left for Tullamarine airport and Melbourne.

We had enjoyed six days of Victorian Western District's hospitality, marvellous gardens and superb weather. I extend my thanks to the garden owners and to all who contributed to making the tour a success. I especially thank Jocelyn Mitchell and Peter Watts for their assistance.

Helen Andersson

REVIEW

The Wishing Tree, by Ed Wilson (Kangaroo Press in association with the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, 1992, RRP \$29.95, available from The Gardens Shop and good booksellers)

When Ed Wilson and I worked together at the Royal Botanic Gardens Ed would spend every spare moment of his time compiling and editing the historical data which has finally resulted in the publication of *The Wishing Tree*.

For Ed it has been a true labour of love, dating back to 1968 when he was inspired by a series of lectures at Armidale Teachers' College given by Dr Lionel Gilbert. Fired further with enthusiasm inherited from a succession of fellow workers at the gardens, and spurred on by the statutory demands of the Heritage Act to compile a register of heritage items in the Gardens, Ed delved deep into all known repositories of information on the subject.

The Wishing Tree is a fascinating chronicle of the history of the Royal Botanic Gardens, the Domain and Centennial Park as seen through their wealth of buildings, gates, pathways, statues, pavilions, fountains and trees. The social, cultural and botanical significance of these structures and plants reflects the history of an important part of Sydney.

Whether you are a lover of history, an *aficionado* of public art or just one of the millions of visitors who each

year stroll through these places you will find something of interest in *The Wishing Tree*. We must never take the Royal Botanic Gardens and our historic parks for granted – they are the lungs of our sprawling city and Ed's book can only help us appreciate them all the more.

With his background in science and teaching, interest in history and talent as a poet and writer Ed Wilson has provided the reader with the sort of interesting detail which transforms each statue and memorial into the pieces of a fascinating jigsaw puzzle that together make up our wonderful legacy of botanical gardens and public parks.

If there is any criticism of the book it is that the printing does not always do justice to the fine photographs, particularly those of the Gardens' talented photographer Jaime Plaza. It is encouraging to see BP Australia supporting the publication of *The Wishing Tree* as a follow up to their sponsorship of the interpretive display in the Sydney Tropical Centre.

The Council of the City of Sydney has also lent support to the book as a sesqui-centenary endorsed project. Filled with literary allusions and several of the author's own poems *The Wishing Tree* should appeal to all those who love history, trees or just a good read – that should cover just about everyone. Highly recommended.

Chris Betteridge

Southern Highlands/Southern NSW Branch

Day trip to Wentworth Falls

On Saturday May 1, a sunny, warm Autumn day, members and friends of the AGHS travelled to the Blue Mountains to visit three gardens at Wentworth Falls and one at Katoomba.

After a long trip we arrived at Gabbinbar, the home of Dorothy and Lyle Davis, where we were welcomed with a delicious morning tea before setting out around the garden. The property had been established by the Mort family just after the turn of the century; the Stedman family (of Minties fame) being the next owners. By the late 1930s the original large plantings of English Oaks, Maples, Planes, Cedars and other conifers had reached maturity, and in the early 1940s Paul Sorensen directed further landscaping. The garden, which is located on the northern side of the house, is laid out with meandering paths bordered by lichen covered rocks acting as edging to raised beds planted with Azaleas, Rhododendrons and Maples along with many other species. The present owners are confidently managing the many problems associated with a wonderful old garden and are busy with restoration and renewal.

Far Horizons, the garden of Ron and Daphne Moore, was a complete change. The house and garden are set on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Grose Valley backed by Mount Wilson and other peaks. The formal section of the garden is located in front of the house and has been thoughtfully designed so as not to interfere with the magnificent view nor the hanging swamp between the garden and the cliff face. To each side of the central garden formality lessens as the garden melds with the native eucalypts in a very acceptable manner. The hanging swamp is an area through which water is filtered to the valley below and in which can be found Ericas, Hakeas and Grevilleas in almost impenetrable profusion.

La Vista (courtesy of Frank and Maureen Williams) is another garden designed by Paul Sorensen, who in the 1930s terraced the hillside to the rear of the house with extensive stonework and planted a fine selection of trees, shrubberies and perennials. Lunch became a feast on a green tennis court lawn bordered on one side by a prolifically flowering white Sasanqua Camellia hedge and on the other by a view down the garden. The house was built c1912 by the retailing Buckingham family at which time the name of the property was perhaps more appropriate, since the view is now limited to the garden. Of special note were two magnificent Tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*).

Lilianfels is a hotel complex located at Echo Point, Katoomba, and was our final garden for the day. Originally Lilianfels was the name of the country house built for the Chief Justice of New South Wales in the mid 1800s. When the hotel was built the dilapidated house was restored and is now a restaurant. We were very fortunate to have Colin Slade look after us. Colin is the Head Gardener at Lilianfels and a keen historian, and was not only able to tell us what the place used to look like, but could show us the photographs as well. The gardens around the house are as far as is practicable, being restored to their original state. A

shady Pinetum remains to give visitors a taste of a forest and huge old palms, Laurels and Sasanqua Camellia hedges are among many treats for the eye. Many trees were transplanted to make way for the new building including one which had a rootball weighing 40 tonnes.

We all had a wonderful day; our only regret was that, because of our warm dry autumn (the driest for 28 years), autumn colours were not at their best, but we all want to see it all again in Spring.

Barbara and Robert Reed

Queensland Branch

Autumn on Mt. Tamborine – a diary jotting

Mt. Tamborine, a volcanic plateau, 551 metres above sea level, some twenty five kilometres west of the Gold Coast, has become a popular destination for weekend tourists. Some of the members of the Queensland Branch joined the throng who head up to the cool, picturesque plateau on Sunday May 31 to explore some of the beautiful gardens of the Mountain and to discover why Autumn, with all her glories, graces Tamborine while Brisbane and the Gold Coast hardly notice the change in season.

We were indeed fortunate to have join our group a long-term resident, professional gardener and plantsman extraordinaire, Thorald Manns. Thorry, who in the past had been responsible for the gardens at St Bernards Hotel for twelve and a half years, gave us a wonderful guided tour of the extensive grounds with many interesting anecdotes about the swimming pool, originally built on the creek by American servicemen during World War II, the devastation caused by the 1974 floods and the history of the gardens as he knew them.

Our social visit was to the private garden of Mrs Irene Fountain. This garden, though only twelve years old, has been planned and lovingly tended by a lady who loves rock gardens and has succeeded in beautifully displaying a wonderful collection of ground hugging perennials as well as bulbs and flowering shrubs, beneath a backdrop of now mature exotic trees. Some of our members could not resist purchasing a plant or two from her tiny nursery to add to their gardens.

With many of the parks already full of families and groups, we chose a quieter place, Guanaba Park, to enjoy a picnic lunch and a chance to catch up on garden topics before leaving to visit our third garden for the day. The large garden, owned by Dr and Mrs Youngman, on the edge of the Eastern escarpment overlooking the Gold Coast, is entered along a wonderful driveway bordered on both sides by Agapanthus with a backdrop to the South of some ten acres of remnant rainforest. Many wonderful old trees and shrubs such as a huge *Magnolia grandiflora*, Persimmon, ancient Camellias and heavenly scented Luculias drew us on and on to explore this lovely old garden.

As Autumn days are short at Tamborine, we had to leave to visit our last garden in North Tamborine. This garden, created by the owners, Mr and Mrs Cantrell, over a period of six years from a disused poultry farm complete with out-buildings, hen runs, an eighty year old Wisteria and an ancient Camphor Laurel, using organic principles and

much hard work, was indeed a pleasure to visit. Herbs, silver foliaged plants, scented geraniums and bulbs, all prolific and healthy in their mulch of composted lucerne hay, were abundant, giving a lovely ambience of a country cottage garden.

Although not officially scheduled to be visited, a few lucky members were given the rare opportunity to see Thorry Mann's garden. As the evening light was beginning to colour the sky, we strolled around this small garden, perfectly maintained, with a wonderful rainforest backdrop of

Tamborine Mountain National Park, and were filled with awe and wonder with each step for it contained a collection of at least forty years by a dedicated plantsman including a cactus house, and two ferneries crammed with magnificent specimens of varieties of plants most of us had never seen before. Feeling inspired and somewhat weary, we joined the procession of visitors leaving the Mountain, all promising to return in September to experience the flowering bulbs and the seasonal freshness Spring brings to Tamborine.

Richard Jones

LETTERS

Burradoo, 2576

The need for younger members

After attending my first AGHS conference in Adelaide in 1992 I felt it was a pity that more young people were not present. For the AGHS to grow into the future it is important that younger members are attracted to the Society. To develop an approach to stimulate young membership we must look at benefits associated with the AGHS, potential sources of membership and some approaches to attract young people.

Some of the benefits that the AGHS offers that need to be advertised is the opportunity for people to:

- Meet and interact with like minded individuals interested in gardens, landscapes and related subjects.
- See a broad spectrum of gardens which will stimulate new ideas.
- Contribute to garden working bees which increases knowledge of the 'hands on' aspects of gardens.

These and other qualities need to be emphasised when attracting young members as they will give people a clear understanding of what the society has to offer.

Potential sources of membership could be from a variety of garden related fields which might include horticulture, architecture, fine art, landscape design and arboriculture to name a few. The most appropriate approach would be to visit training institutions or schools and to talk to students and staff about the AGHS. By targeting a few institutions at the beginning, the best approach can be assessed as to the most effective way of spreading the AGHS philosophy.

One approach to encourage younger members from training institutions might be to include AGHS activities into the curriculum. This would allow students to contribute to 'real life' projects rather than to the hypothetical ones they normally work on. This contribution might be in the form of working bees, drawing up plans or identifying trees in historic gardens.

The aim of this letter has been to stimulate thought on how to attract more young members. As a twenty three year old I see the AGHS as an organisation which has a great deal to offer people of all ages. There are many extraordinarily talented individuals within the membership of the AGHS and it is essential that their knowledge and expertise is passed on to young members. It is the young members joining the ranks who will be the future gardeners and caretakers of horticultural institutions and they must be attracted so the society will continue to expand for future generations.

Nicholas Bray

*The University of Sydney, Department of Architecture
Queen's Gardens, Brisbane*

In their article, 'Queen's Gardens, Brisbane', Jan Seto and Jeannie Sim (*Australian Garden History* 4(6)9-11) state that Harry Oakman 'trained several future park managers such as Lionel Steenbhom (Adelaide Botanic Gardens), Alan Wilson (Townsville Botanic Gardens) and Val Ellis (Perth Botanic Gardens).

This is not entirely correct. Lionel Steenbhom went from the Brisbane City Council to become Director of Parks and Gardens, Perth City Council and not the Adelaide Botanic Gardens. Val Ellis came to Brisbane from Western Australia to replace Steenbhom and later became Director of Parks and Gardens, Adelaide City Council but this did not include the Botanic Gardens. Alan Wilson replaced Ellis in Brisbane and later became Director of Parks and Gardens in Townsville and this did include the Botanic Gardens. Wilson again joined Harry Oakman at the NCDC in Canberra in 1967.

However, Harry Oakman did not train any of these men. Lionel Steenbhom and Alan Wilson were both trained in ornamental horticulture and garden design at the Botanic Gardens (now Royal Botanic Gardens) Sydney and at the Sydney Technical College (now TAFE Ryde School of Horticulture). Lionel and Alan were older contemporaries of mine at the Sydney Botanic Gardens, and Alan and I were fellow students at the Sydney Technical College from 1947 to 1950. Both Lionel and Alan had considerable experience in horticulture and design when Harry appointed them. Val Ellis, trained in Perth, was also very experienced when he became Oakman's deputy.

Lionel Steenbhom died only a few years after taking up his appointment in Perth. Alan Wilson is now retired and spends most of his time in Sweden and Val Ellis died some years ago in Adelaide.

Allan Correy, June 1993

Double Bay, NSW 2027

Edmund Blake, 'gardener perfect'

In a letter in your last issue T. R. Garnett asks if anyone has any information about Edward Blake, a gardener from King's Lynn.

As it happens, I have been making enquiries about Edmund Blake, who must be the person referred to, in relation to the breeding of new garden plants in Australia, a number of the earliest having been named *Blakit* after him. My article in *Australian Garden History* 4(4)3-5 refers to him in relation to the raising of new *Erythrina*s.

His native place was Lynn in Norfolk where he worked in a nursery. On arrival in Australia he was described as a 'gardener perfect' and his surviving letters show that the description was well deserved.

On 6 January 1834 the following charge was heard against him:

The King against Edmund Blake late of this parish of St. Margaret's in this borough, labourer for that he on this 28th October last past, in a certain garden of Thomas Marshall there situate one hundred shrubs the property of Thomas Marshall in the said garden there growing, feloniously, did break root up and damage thereby then doing injury unto the said Thomas Marshall to an amount exceeding the sum of one pound to the amount of ten pounds to the great damage against the place.

He was convicted, the *Norfolk Chronicle* of 11 January publishing the following account of the trial:

Edmund Blake was indicted for maliciously cutting and destroying a number of greenhouse and other plants in the garden of Mr Thomas Marshall, nurseryman of Lynn: the damage was estimated at about 400 pounds. He was found guilty and sentenced to seven years transportation.

Showing that journalists then had no more respect for accuracy than they have today.

Although he had no previous convictions he was probably a man with a violent temper. He was short dark with numerous scars and all his front teeth were missing. His employers in Australia certainly had difficulties keeping the peace between him and his fellow workers.

He arrived in Sydney on the 'Bengal Merchant' on 30 January 1835 aged 24 years. He was assigned to James and William Macarthur of Camden Park, where Naismith Robertson was principal gardener and where he worked with Francis Ferguson and Silas Sheather. He had frequent confrontations with Ferguson.

On 7 September 1840 he was granted a Ticket of Leave and allowed to remain in the district of Stonequarry. In fact he stayed at Camden Park until he died, of apoplexy, on 14 November 1880. He was unmarried and left his entire estate amounting to less than £80 to the church of St. John the Evangelist there.

Apart from the events leading up to his enforced emigration his main claim to fame, as far as I am aware, is in relation to the introduction of plant breeding to Australia. I am convinced that his role in this was a minor one as I hope to show in a paper I am working on at present.

Richard Clough, May 1993

‘*INNOVATIVE garden design*’

*An illustrated talk by noted
English Garden Designer
Julian Treyer-Erns*

At the Toorak Uniting Church
hall, Toorak Road, Toorak,
Victoria.

Tuesday 3 August at 8 pm

Admission \$15.

(Proceeds to 'Friends of the Elms')

Bookings ph: (03) 890 5764

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY TOUR

TASMANIAN GARDENS IN THE SPRING

5 DAYS

Sunday October 10 – Friday October 15, 1993

\$712.00

This is an opportunity for members to see gardens in the north and on the east coast of Tasmania before the AGHS conference in Hobart.

We visit gardens and homesteads in Launceston, Longford, Cressy, Deloraine, Fingal and Glamorgan and enjoy fine Tasmanian food and hospitality to arrive in Hobart in time for the AGHS Conference.

*For brochure and reservations
CONTACT HELEN ANDERSSON*

Tours Organiser AGHS

Wildes Meadow Road

Wildes Meadow NSW 2577

Telephone: (048) 864 337 Fax: (048) 864 295

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY

ACT, MONARO AND RIVERINA BRANCH

- Saturday 17 and Sunday 18

WINTER SEMINAR: THE GARDEN IN ART

An exciting weekend is planned for this years Winter Seminar. There will be topics such as: NINETEENTH CENTURY GARDENS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ART, GARDEN ART IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY COLLECTIONS by Barbara Perry of the National Library; WOMEN ARTISTS AND THEIR FLOWERS by Dr Joan Kerr of Sydney University, editor of *Dictionary of Australian Artists to 1870* and author of *From Sydney Cove to Duntroon*; THE ART OF ELLIS ROWAN by Helen Hewson author of a recent book on Ellis Rowan; GARDENS IN TWENTIETH CENTURY ART by Andrew Sayers from the National Gallery of Australia (Andrew Sayers is author of *One Hundred years of Australian Drawings, Drawing in Australia, Drawings, Pastels, and collages 1770-1985, Sydney Nolan Drawings and Australian Drawings and Watercolours*). There will be an opportunity to view some of the works in the National Library Collection and view the Exhibition Treasures of the National Library which has an outstanding collection of Art works. On the Sunday morning Jenny Manning of the National Gallery will take us on tour of the Sculpture Gardens of the Gallery and talk about the sculptures and the Native Plantings in the garden. This is really a reversal of the title as Art in the Garden. There will be some interesting exhibitions on at the Gallery for everyone to enjoy at their leisure: School of Paris Prints; Chinese Textiles from South East Asia; a retrospective exhibition of an Australian sculptor and an exhibition by an Aboriginal Artist. There will be a dinner on the Saturday evening in the Drawing Room at University House. An elegant three course meal with wine will enable local members to meet out of town members. **COSTS:** \$45.00 members; \$55.00 non-members; \$34.00 dinner. **PHONE** Victor Crittenden (06) 251 2519. **APPLICATIONS** by 10th July 1993. **LOCATION:** Canberra.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS/SOUTHERN NSW BRANCH

- Sunday 25
Annual General Meeting
3.00 pm at Rotherwood, Sutton Forest.

AUGUST

VICTORIAN BRANCH

- Tuesday 10
Annual General Meeting.
Guest speaker Professor Ken Taylor, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Canberra, will talk on Australian Landscape Painting from 1788 to the present day. **TIME:** 8.00pm; **VENUE:** National Herbarium, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra. **COST:** Members free, Guests \$5. **ENQUIRIES:** National Office Ph. 650 5043.

TASMANIAN BRANCH

- Sunday 15
Annual General Meeting.
Guest Speaker: Mrs Pam Hutchins of Richmond Hill Nursery who will speak on roses. **VENUE:** The Grange, Campbelltown; **TIME:** 2.00pm. Afternoon Tea will be served. **ENQUIRIES:** Fairie Nielsen, PH: (004) 330 077.

WEST AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

- Sunday – early August
Exhibition of State Library Archives – Viewing of material relating to West Australian garden history

SYDNEY & NORTHERN NSW BRANCH

- Tuesday 3
Talk on the Historic Houses Trust resource centre's collection on gardens followed by Annual General Meeting. We are looking for members to take an active interest in the Sydney Branch. **VENUE:** Historic Houses Trust, Lyndhurst, 61 Darghan Street, Glebe. **TIME:** 6.00pm.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

- Friday 20
The Annual General Meeting will be a dinner meeting to be held at the Public School's Club.

SEPTEMBER

VICTORIAN BRANCH

- Tuesday 7
A fascinating video made by the U.K. National Trust on the restoration of the unique garden at Biddulph Grange. **TIME:** 7.30pm. **VENUE:** Lecture Theatre, M.G.G.S. 82 Anderson Street, South Yarra. **COST:** Members \$5, Guests \$7. **ENQUIRIES:** National Office Ph. 650 5043.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

- Sunday 19
A Spring Garden Visit – Proposed destinations include Bishop's Court, and the Phillip's Garden in Medindie.

OCTOBER

NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

- 10-15 October
Tasmanian Gardens in the Spring (see advertisement in this issue).
- 15-18 October
Annual conference in Tasmania.

SYDNEY & NORTHERN NSW BRANCH

- Saturday 23
Beecroft open garden day. More details follow next issue.

VICTORIAN BRANCH

- Friday 22
Ms Ethne Clarke, author and keynote speaker at the Hobart Conference, will speak on *The Influence of Renaissance Gardens on Twentieth Century Design*. **TIME:** 6.30pm. **VENUE:** Radio Theatre, R.M.I.T. Building 9, cnr



Trisha Dixon

Box hedging and shrubberies at Woollongoon (see article on page 10)

Bowen Lane and Franklin Street City. **BOOKINGS:** essential. **COST:** Members \$7, Guests \$10. **ENQUIRIES:** National Office Ph. 650 5043.

NOVEMBER

WEST AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

- Sunday 7
Guided Tour of Narrows Interchange Park. Commentary by its designer John Oldham
- Saturday 27 & Sunday 28
Country Gardens Tour – Pinjarra/Waroona (Combined with Heritage Rose Society)

VICTORIAN BRANCH

- Wednesday 3
Dr Christopher Ridgway (U.K.) will speak on the history of the landscape at Castle Howard, Yorks. U.K. (setting for *Brideshead Revisited*). **TIME:** 6.30 pm. **VENUE:** Radio Theatre, RMIT Building 9, cnr Bowen Lane and Franklin Street City. **BOOKINGS:** essential. **COST:** Members \$7, Guests \$10. **ENQUIRIES:** National Office Ph. 650 5043
- Saturday 6 and Sunday 7

Cathedral Ranges Gardens and natural landscape with Rodger and Gwen Elliot. **COST:** Members \$70, Guests \$85. **INFORMATION AND BOOKING FORM:** from National Office Ph. 650 5043.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

- Saturday 13
Newmans Nursery Picnic Day – joining staff and customers on a walk to the old nursery in Anstey Park Reserve.

DECEMBER 1993

VICTORIAN BRANCH

- Monday 6
BYO picnic followed by a talk at 8.00 pm. **HAMPERS:** to order from National Office. **TIME:** From 6.00 pm. **VENUE:** Herbarium Lawn. **COST:** Members free, Guests \$5.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

- Friday 3
Christmas drinks at Walnut Hill in Stirling, the garden of Mr Trevor Nottle.